



AXEMAN REPORT

MAY 2007



FROM THE CDR

Dear Family & Friends of Alpha Company 1-121st FA BN,

Greetings from our new home in Kuwait. Happy May Day, Mother's day and Memorial Day. I hope this newsletter finds you all safe and well.

Yes, we have completed our move and have resumed operations at our new location at Camp Virginia. Although not a small undertaking, the transition from Navistar to Virginia went very smoothly. This is a testament to the Soldiers and leaders for executing the plans and their missions superbly. Much of the hard work in allowing us to move in smoothly was paved by our advance party personnel who worked vigorously to ready our new tentage areas and Company Operations building for an easy transition into the new facilities. Special thanks goes out to our "construction crew" of **SGT Glenn Ondayog**, **SGT Paul Woodman**, **SGT Jeremy Cote**, and **SGT Leonard Hanson II**. Not only have they prepared our building, but **SGT Ondayog**, **SGT Woodman** and **SGT Cote** have also personally constructed porches for two other buildings within the compound. Great job!!!



SGT Leonard Hanson II preparing to continue building railings on our new porch addition to the new Alpha Company Operations building.



Time is passing by quickly in the latter stages of our deployment as we continue to execute our missions. There is much planning going on in preparation for the training of our replacement unit and executing the move back home to our families. Although the excitement is building, your Soldiers are maintaining the focus needed to complete both monumental tasks and you should be extremely proud of them.

This month, we were honored with a visit by **MG David P. Rataczak**, The Adjutant General for Arizona and **CSM Karen Craig**, Arizona State Command Sergeant Major. **MG Rataczak** and **CSM Craig** were on a return trip from Afghanistan and stopped to visit with the Arizona Soldiers attached to our company and battalion from the 221st CAV.

Following a briefing on the Battalion's mission to date, **MG Rataczak** graciously participated in an awards ceremony, presenting well deserved awards to his Arizona Soldiers. Following the awards ceremony, the Arizona Soldiers briefed **MG Rataczak** on their vehicles and provided an overview of the execution of their missions. Congratulations to all the Arizona soldiers on their awards.



MG David P. Rataczak, The Adjutant General for Arizona (center right) awards the Purple Heart to **SPC James Trapp**, Alpha Company Axeman from **AZARNG**, during a recent ceremony as Arizona State Command Sergeant Major, **CSM Karen Craig** (right) looks on. More photos in the "Closing Shots" section of this newsletter.



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Congratulations this month goes out to the Soldiers listed in 1SG Paul Eubank's section on their recent, well deserved promotions. These Soldiers have worked extremely hard and are ready for the challenges of their positions.

Our sincere, heartfelt thanks goes out again this month to the following for the generous support they've provided to the Alpha Company Soldiers: **Roger Quandt, the Sun Journal, and Dunkin Donuts** for the numerous cases of editions of the Sun Journal accompanied with the POUNDS of Dunkin Donuts Coffee; **Thomas D. Hall from Alion Science in Bath, Maine** for the packages of paperback books; and a special thanks to **Terry and Bob Jackan**, parents of **1LT Daniel Jackan**, Platoon Leader in Bravo Company from **Appleton, Wisconsin** who again, sent care packages for every Soldier in the Battalion ; and again to **EVERYONE** who I might have missed. Bless you all!!!

Well, that's all for this month. Thanks again to all our family and friends for your continued support. Be proud of your Soldiers as they continue to set the standard of performance for all to emulate.

Until we chat again.

v/r

CPT Kent A. Cousins

Commander

Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)

"Axeman 6"

Go Black Bears!!!!



From The "Top"

Hello!

Well, the best kept secret is out. We've moved. Of course, the odds are the families have probably known about this since it was first announced at the morning staff meeting.

The move had it's challenges, but as always with any challenge that's come our way, the officers, NCOs and Soldiers of Alpha Company made it happen as painlessly as possible. We've settled in now and we'll probably be here, in the tents we've moved into, until the day we load our duffel bags onto buses and head further south (or east – without mountains on one horizon or another, or GPS in hand, it's sometimes hard to tell what direction is what)

for all day briefings, Customs inspections, and finally, board the flight that'll bring us back home.

Anyway, this month we've only had two lateral promotions:

CPL Jason L. Malcom (NV ARNG), Las Vegas, NV
CPL Ryan P. Wroblewski (NV ARNG), Las Vegas, NV

Both Soldiers are from the 4th Platoon, and both are very deserving of wearing the rank of Corporal.

Recently, we also had a visit from the Arizona Adjutant General, **Major General David P. Rataczak**. He stopped here at Camp Virginia to visit with Soldiers from his state and to preside over an awards ceremony. Due to the many missions into Iraq our deserving Soldiers aren't always present when generals preside over mass ceremonies. **MG Rataczak** presented awards to:

SSG Douglas Gahm (AZ ARNG, Laveen, AZ - Army Achievement Medal

SGT John Randall (AZ ARNG), Tucson, AZ - Army Achievement Medal

SGT Justin Smith (AZ ARNG), Mesa AZ – Army Commendation Medal

SGT Joseph Wireman (AZ ARNG), Mesa, AZ – Army Commendation Medal

SPC James Trapp (AZ ARNG), Fort Irwin, CA - Purple Heart; Combat Action Badge; Army Achievement Medal

All of these Soldiers have served proudly and honorably during the past 10 months. They are part of what makes Alpha Company such a great Company, and why being the First Sergeant of Alpha Company is a position to be proud of.

In the newsletter, you'll see a couple of photographs from the awards ceremony courtesy of **MSG James Tash, Jr.**

Have fun everyone, enjoy the cool spring, and we'll see all of you in a few weeks!

1SG Paul M. Eubank

First Sergeant

Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)

"Axeman 7"



MEMORIAL DAY



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HQS PLATOON

Hello from the Axe-Men of Northern Kuwait!
(Central Kuwait? Or East Central Kuwait?)

Okay, this is it! Only four more paydays until we return home! We're under 60 days!

And of course, you know by now that we've moved. Actually, it was probably one of the best known secrets since forever. We've left the sunny desert oasis of Convoy Support Center Navistar and we're now settled into the sunny oasis (kind of near the Kuwaiti beaches – sort of) of Camp Virginia! It was quite a feat with stopping operations for a brief but specified time in order to make the move.

Of course, Administration was in the lead by sending an advance part of one down to Virginia to assist in planning and coordinating the establishment of our very critical area. And of course, the Operations Section followed suit. It was a relatively smooth transition when we shut down operations at Navistar and stood up our operations at Virginia. And of course, Operations followed suit.

Actually, a great deal of credit goes to the planning and foresight of our First Sergeant, **1SG Paul M. Eubank**, and our commander, **CPT Kent Cousins**. Then too, we had several Soldiers who helped establish our foothold in Virginia – **1LT John Gates (ME ARNG)**, HQ Platoon; **SGT Glenn Ondayog (NV ARNG)**, 4th Platoon; **SGT Paul Woodman (ME ARNG)**, 2nd Platoon, and **SGT Jeremy Cote (ME ARNG)**, 2nd Platoon, have accomplished wonders in the building and finishing of our Company building.

PFC Dustin Pelletier (ME ARNG), HQ Platoon, really earned his nickname of "Gypsy" with his "turn and burn" travels between the camps moving everything from beds, mattresses, wall lockers, chairs, home-made desks, and duffel bags.



During those few hours when mission operations ceased, there was a stream of vehicles filling the roads; when they pulled into Virginia our guys really did look like a "Gypsy caravan with an attitude" on the move. To move tables, chairs, ice chests, and mattresses is fine – but it sort of looks interesting when those items are strapped and tied to the back of a HMMWV, on the front, and even stuffed inside the weapons turret. Many times when Soldiers unloaded their HMMWV, they hit the road again for another mission into Iraq.

Maybe it didn't look pretty, maybe it wasn't photographically pretty, and maybe our guys did look like a Gypsy caravan on the move, but it worked! And that's what counts. But, we've moved, we've settled in (for a couple of weeks), and pretty soon we can put all of this behind us. We're coming home!

Have a great week.

The Axe-Men of Northern Kuwait (Central Kuwait? Or East Central Kuwait?)

SSG Stanley Hampton

Admin NCO

Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)

"Axeman Historian"

1st PLATOON

Hello families and friends of 1st Platoon,

Well here we are in Camp Virginia, Kuwait. No more Navistar. A FOB that was created to support a war that was only supposed to last a couple of years has been turned back to the landowners, a few OIFs later than was planned, but returned just the same. We don't know what they will do with it and the general consensus is, we don't care.

Life at Camp Virginia is pretty good. It is more spread out, so it requires more walking and time to get where you want to go, but there are many more services and activities to walk to.



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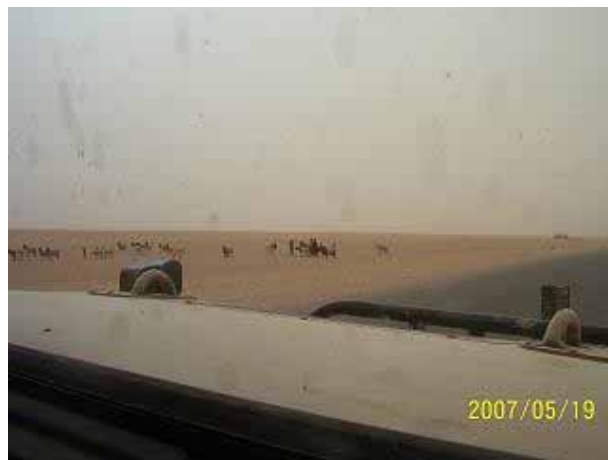
But hey, with 50 some odd days to go before the wheels retract on the plane at takeoff and we begin our trip home, we can handle whatever the big Army hands us. The challenges encountered with moving and the different way business in our convoy security missions are conducted has been met with classic Maine persistence and ingenuity. Be proud of your Soldiers; they are doing a great job.

I have had the opportunity to assist your Soldiers while they conducted sustainment missions and that also meant I had a chance to snap a few pictures. Hope you enjoy them as much as I enjoyed working with the Soldiers.

Thank you for your continued support. We are counting the days until we can be headed home. We hope that everyone enjoys the early summer months.

See you all soon,

CW2 David Cheney
1st Platoon PLT LDR
Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)
"Axeman 10"



Believe it or not, people do live out here.



A Blackhawk helicopter flying by one of our convoys.



Herding trucks through the new border crossing.





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Posing for a picture while waiting at the border crossing are: (front left to right) SSG Joshua Willette; SGT Andrew Moores; SGT Allen Rood; SSG Scot Mackenzie; (middle) SPC Derek Freeman; SPC Dennis Troxell; (top left) SPC Aaron Whittier; and SPC Craig Light.



Shown during a break on mission are: (front left to right) SGT Joseph Nott; SSG Scot Mackenzie; SPC Hugh Goodfellow; SPC Derek Freeman; SGT James Barnard; SPC William Pulliam; CPT Donald Brinkman; and PFC Dustin Pelletier; (top middle / left to right) SPC Kevin Tedesco; SSG Ronald Ruhlin; and SPC Daniel Eggert.



Catching some shade at the border crossing are: (from left to right) CPL Donald Brinkman; SGT Joseph Nott; SPC Hugh Goodfellow and SPC Daniel Eggert.



Also catching some shade are: PFC Dustin Pelletier and SPC Derek Freeman.



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Rolling the convoy through the southern Iraqi desert.



Catching a breather and drinks before heading out on mission are: (from left to right) SGT Colby Ford; SGT Roger Willette; SPC Aaron Priest; SGT Brian Poplin; and SPC Craig Light.



Convoy departing from Camp Virginia MCT (Movement Control Team) lot.



SPC Craig Light waits at the MCT lot at Camp Virginia.



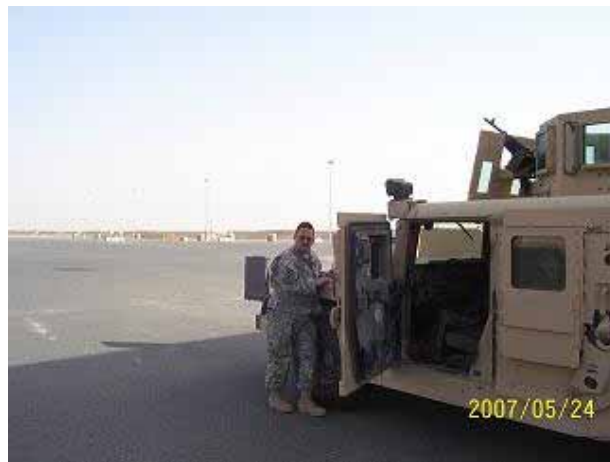


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SPC Richard Parker taking a picture of "the picture taker" as SPC Craig Light looks on.



SPC William Pulliam passing the time by completing his Suduko puzzle while waiting at the border crossing.



SPC Kevin Tedesco ready to roll in his ASV turret with PFC Dustin Pelletier in the driver's seat.



SPC Kevin Tedesco enjoying a laugh with SPC Richard Parker at the border crossing.



*Happy
Mother's Day*

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SPC Aaron Whittier sitting on top of his ASV waiting to depart on mission.



Catching some shade while waiting for trucks to clear customs at the border are: (from left to right) SSG Scot Mackenzie; SGT James Barnard; and SSG Ronald Ruhlin.



Climbing out of the ASV after a successful mission are: SSG Ronald Ruhlin (front) and SPC Kevin Tedesco (rear).



Discussing tactics are: (from left to right) SSG Ronald Ruhlin; SSG Scot Mackenzie; and SGT Joseph Nott.



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2nd PLATOON



Stretching their legs upon crossing the border returning from mission are: SPC Daniel Eggert (left) and SGT James Barnard (right).



The truck drivers that we escort live and eat from their vehicles.



April Showers bring May flowers as the saying goes, well for us in Iraq it is more like April dust storms brings May heat. Oh yes, we have come into the hot season again. It is a challenge in itself to ride in the up armored vehicles in such heat. The gun trucks are just big, steel boxes that collect heat, and the AC is just there to keep the inside from getting unbearably hot. The best time to do mission is certainly at night were the temp will drop down 30 degrees and be comfortable to operate. You'll find most Soldiers have learned from the locals that it is best to keep a night schedule. A nap in the middle of the day is best way to make it through the heat and the evenings and mornings is the best time to get work done outside.

Along with the heat, we have had several other challenges to deal with from late April to end of May. The "Move" and the continuing surge of new troops into theater are among the notable challenges. 2nd Platoon Soldiers have made it through the move quite nicely. We successfully moved all are equipment and possessions while doing missions at the same time. 2nd Platoon as always has supplied help to others across the battalion in helping toward the move effort. This is certainly no small feat as we are probably the only unit in this war to have accomplished a move while still continuing missions that are ever more demanding from the oncoming troop surge. But we have made it. We are settled into are new home. Things aren't that much different, same job different place. Camp Virginia has one strategic advantage to us, it is a lot closer to the airport when we get ready to leave; that is a very nice thought for us.

Congratulations to **SSG Christopher McBean**. He was promoted recently in a FOB far away from our home base. We often do things on the road like promotions as we are on the road more often. The Soldiers of 2nd Platoon are aware time is getting short and are anxious to see there loved ones. But the platoon's concentration is still on mission and will be until the last Soldier comes back from the last mission.



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Our job is of the utmost importance; supplying the theater with all the supplies it needs. We know in 2nd Platoon the more we concentrate on the mission at hand, the quicker the days will shed off the calendar and the evermore closer we will be home in loved ones arms.

Until next time.

1LT H. Michael Gary
2nd PLT Platoon Leader
Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)
"Axeman 20"



1LT H. Michael Gary (center) stands at attention during the promotion ceremony of SSG Christopher McBean (right) as SGT Richard Aveau (left) reads the citation.



"Sunset at Cedar". A couple of 2nd Platoon vehicles shown parked awaiting departure at CSC Cedar late in the afternoon.



SGT Kyland Lusby getting in some last minute exercise prior to departing on a mission.





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SGT Richard Aveau enjoying a laugh while waiting to depart on a recent mission.

3rd PLATOON

AXEMAN 30 BAGHDAD BLOG

ALLONS!!!

Move out the way because the Axemen of Alpha Company are on their way. We have completed another month of convoy security missions via a new route and we have moved to our new home away from the Iraq/Kuwait border. It's definitely not like FOB 5 star Navistar but this new FOB just enlightens us that we're one day closer to seeing our families and loved ones back in stateside this summer. The new FOB is in the middle of the desert and we have experienced sandstorms like it was hurricane season in the eastern coasts of the States. We even have a McDonalds inside our new base and we also enjoy watching coalition forces, such as the Brits, rush towards the chow hall during meal hours like a procession of ants in and out of their anthills.

The platoon wishes a belated Happy Mother's day to our girlfriends, wives, mothers, and grandmothers; we know your special day was unfair with us being gone but we'll make it up to you ladies when we return from our deployment.

The Axemen of 3rd Platoon remain focused on the mission and continues to lead the way for others to follow; the squad leaders, MSG Kinsey, and I are so proud of our righteous warriors and we are grateful to lead these motivated and dedicated volunteers to develop into one team, one fight. We see the light at the end of the tunnel but our mission is not over. With your continued support and prayers, we will remain strong and vigilant. Please remember our fallen comrades and continue to include them in your thoughts and prayers this Memorial Day.

Never Broken!!!

Until next month, be safe and best wishes.

2LT Rommel Ferrer

3rd PLT Platoon Leader

Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)

"Axeman 30"



SPC Joshua Masse poses with a TCN (Third Country National) driver for a picture prior to departing on a recent mission.



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Shown after another successful mission are: (from left to right) SPC Russell Waite; SPC Ronald Easton; SGT Phillip "The Hulkster" Fred; and SPC Derek Ernst.



Shown cleaning their weapons are (from left to right) SPC Benjamin Pesis and SPC Mark Bright.



Catching some sleep on their C-130 ride to ASV training are: (from center, left to right) SGT Brian Green; SPC Douglas Pierce; and SPC Santil Doree.



Practicing an ASV evacuation drill are: (from left to right) SPC Douglas Pierce; SPC Santil Doree; and SGT Brian Green.





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SGT Salvador Orozcos getting "shaken down" for some candy by local children.



SPC Helman Roman pointing the way to Columbia.



SPC Joseph "DOC" Hall providing some first aid to a head injury.



Posing "on the border" are: (standing) SPC Russell Waite; SFC Douglas Perez; SPC Ronald Easton; and (laying down) SPC Derek Ernst.





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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
1st Squadron, 221st Cavalry
6400 N. Range Road
Las Vegas, Nevada 89009



4th PLATOON

Happy Memorial Day in the month of May Nevada. Now that all of you have returned from Ocean Side and the free ski day at Mammoth, you can hear this greeting and be rest assured that the next big adventure will not only be at Lake Tahoe, but it will be with the one you love who has been missing for the past year. The answer to your question is "yes"... we found him. He was hiding at Camp Cedar this last time, unlike the first time when we found him hiding at Camp Scania, before he escaped again. But we trapped him, secured him, and now we got an eye on him to guarantee that his seat on the plane is not given away.

May was certainly a small adventure with the big move from Navistar to Virginia, followed by three days of sand storms and long, one-day missions that take 30 hours. But the new leg added to our route, although not well embraced initially, has been working out pretty well for us and may very well provide a safer circumstance. So with that said and settled, we are all feeling great anticipation for the arrival of our replacement unit as well as the passing on of our assets, our responsibilities, and our knowledge. Then soon we will be passed on to you.

At your convenience be sure to congratulate our newly promoted corporals, CPL Jason Malcom and CPL Wroblewski, whom both have been doing an outstanding job.

Thank you for your prayers and the [very near] future reception.

Until next month.

1LT Frederick Garcia
4th PLT Platoon Leader
Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)
"Axeman 40" a.k.a. "Ghost Rider 40"



Standing at attention during the reading of the NCO Creed during a promotion ceremony are: (from left to right) 1LT Frederick Garcia; CPL Jason Malcom; CPT Kent Cousins; CPL Ryan Wroblewski; and SGT Brian Poplin.



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Contributed Story

AN INCIDENT ON MSR TAMPA

The IED war fought on the MSR by anonymous insurgents is one thing, but when a desert dwelling creature comes out of the vast sandy plains to slice and dice you, that's something entirely different.

1LT H. Michael Gary faced that reality when he fought in hand to pincer combat recently. One of his Soldiers (let's call him **Joshua R. of Augusta**) discovered his lieutenant was under attack and let out a warning scream. Actually, screams. The tall, blonde haired officer was already engaged in the fight of his life.

1LT Gary kicked and stomped his leg and the creature tumbled across the MSR. Before he could draw his weapon it leaped to its feet and circled him, deadly pincers opening and closing hungrily, then darted in again. **1LT Gary** saw his opportunity as the creature lunged forward; desert combat boot met the alien shaped head and the creature staggered away. **Joshua R. of Augusta** didn't comment for this column, but he probably felt helpless. Due to the close combat his 9mm and M-4 were useless because his officer was in the line of fire.

The stubborn, hungry creature circled **1LT Gary**, trying to remain within the shadow of the tall officer so that it could blend in better with the surrounding terrain. It rushed in again, and again desert boot met alien head! The creature backed off, and warily circled though it kept its eyes fastened on its intended victim. It attacked again and received another stomp in the head.

The officer, a veteran of numerous combat missions into the Republic of Iraq, was at his finest, ready to strike with the death-dealing power of an angry cobra. He slowly drew his knife. Again the creature rushed him and **1LT Gary** scored a mortal wound. The maniacal creature staggered in a circle, dragging its badly damaged body while it searched for a weak point in the officer's defenses. The triumphant **1LT Gary** lunged forward with his knife, driving the deadly blade so deep that the point impacted the pavement of MSR Tampa.

The battle was over. **1LT H. Michael Gary** was triumphant in the ancient land of Iraq! The camel spider quivered once and breathed its last.





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Closing Shots



SPC James Trapp (left center) receives the Combat Action Badge during an awards ceremony from MG David P. Rataczak, The Adjutant General for Arizona as Arizona State Command, CSM Karen Craig (right) looks on.



MG David P. Rataczak, The Adjutant General for Arizona (center right) awards the Army Commendation Medal to SGT Justin Smith during a recent ceremony as Arizona State Command Sergeant Major, CSM Karen Craig (right) looks on.



MG David P. Rataczak, The Adjutant General for Arizona (center right) awards the Army Commendation Medal to SGT Joseph Wireman during a recent ceremony as Arizona State Command Sergeant Major, CSM Karen Craig (right) looks on.



MG David P. Rataczak, The Adjutant General for Arizona (center right) awards the Army Achievement Medal to SSG Douglas Gahm during a recent ceremony as Arizona State Command Sergeant Major, CSM Karen Craig (right) looks on.





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Closing Shots (continued)



MG David P. Rataczak, The Adjutant General for Arizona (center right) awards the Army Achievement Medal to SGT John Randall during a recent ceremony as Arizona State Command Sergeant Major, CSM Karen Craig (right) looks on.



MG David P. Rataczak, The Adjutant General for Arizona (center right) awards the Combat Action Badge to SFC Daniel Blanco (221 CAV Arizona Soldier assigned to Charlie Company) during a recent ceremony as Arizona State Command Sergeant Major, CSM Karen Craig (right) looks on.



Arizona Soldiers from the 221 CAV assigned to Bravo Company discuss their M1114 vehicle with CSM Karen Craig (center). Shown are: (from left to right) SPC Brian Connelly; SSG Brian Fritzler; and SPC David Valenzula.



Arizona Soldiers from Alpha Company brief their M1117 ASV to MG David P. Rataczak (center). Shown are (from left to right) SSG Douglas Gahm; SPC James Trapp; and SGT John Randall.



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Closing Shots (continued)



Arizona Soldiers from Alpha Company brief their M1117 ASV to CSM Karen Craig (left). Shown are (from left to right) SSG Douglas Gahm; SPC James Trapp; and SGT John Randall.



Arizona Soldiers from the 221 CAV assigned to Bravo Company discuss their M1114 vehicle with MG David P. Rataczak (center). Shown are: (from left to right) SPC Brian Connelly; SSG Brian Fritzler; SPC David Valenzula; and SGT Joseph Wireman.



Arizona Soldiers pose with the Arizona State Flag in front of an M1117 ASV. Shown are: (front kneeling left to right) SGT John Randall and SPC James Trapp; (standing left to right) SGT Joseph Wireman; SGT Justin Smith; SFC Daniel Gonzales; SPC Brian Connelly; MG David P. Rataczak; CSM Karen Craig; SSG Brian Fritzler; SFC Daniel Blanco; SPC David Valenzula; and SSG Douglas Gahm.



SSG Brian Fritzler (left) presents MG David P. Rataczak, The Adjutant General for Arizona, with an Arizona State Flag flown at Camp Virginia.

